

The Influence of Music Performance on Textile and Fashion Design Trends: From Stage to Streetwear

Min Yi

How to cite: Yi M. The Influence of Music Performance on Textile and Fashion Design Trends: From Stage to Streetwear. Textile & Leather Review. 2025; 8:904-924. <https://doi.org/10.31881/TLR.2025.904>

How to link: <https://doi.org/10.31881/TLR.2025.904>

Published: 10 December 2025



The Influence of Music Performance on Textile and Fashion Design Trends: From Stage to Streetwear

Min YI

College of Preschool Education, Zibo Polytechnic University, Zibo 255000, Shandong, China
yimin19930507@126.com

Article

<https://doi.org/10.31881/TLR.2025.904>

Received 15 August 2025; Accepted 9 September 2025; Published 10 December 2025

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the direct impact of music performance on the textile industry, specifically focusing on how stage costume requirements drive innovation in fiber selection, yarn processing, and fabric manufacturing. It examines the translation mechanism from bespoke performance garments to mass-market textile products, analyzing the entire supply chain from raw fibers—such as cotton, wool, and leather—to finished fabrics produced through weaving, knitting, and advanced chemical finishing. The concert stage is framed as a high-demand testbed for materials science, providing a high-visibility platform for innovations in both natural and advanced synthetic fibers. Evidence includes the mainstreaming of metallic yarns initially showcased by Glam Rock artists and the popularization of performance knits driven by Hip-Hop culture. This laboratory environment pushes the boundaries of material properties, from mechanical durability to optical characteristics. Case studies trace the diffusion of specific textile technologies: the mainstreaming of metallic yarns from Glam Rock; the popularization of chemical and mechanical distressing techniques on cotton denim and leather from Punk; and the adoption of high-performance knits from Hip-Hop. The role of e-textiles and 3D-printed fiber products is also analyzed. The study concludes that this influence is a significant cultural driver for the textile industry, impacting material trends and consumer demand. Furthermore, it explores the growing role of musicians in promoting sustainable development, advocating for eco-friendly fibers and circular economy models, which hold direct implications for agricultural methods and the development of next-generation biodegradable polymers.

KEYWORDS

textile technology, fiber products, sustainable development, leather and synthetic fibers, material properties

INTRODUCTION

The symbiotic relationship between music and fashion is a well-documented cultural phenomenon [1]. From Elvis Presley's gold lamé suit to the Beatles' mod aesthetics and Madonna's provocative corsetry, musicians have consistently served as powerful icons of style, shaping the sartorial choices of generations [2,3]. However,

a significant portion of the discourse surrounding this relationship remains at a surface level, often focusing on celebrity influence without deeply analyzing the underlying processes. The academic literature, particularly within textile science and engineering, has yet to fully systematize the study of how the specific material and technological choices made for stage performance directly impact and drive trends in textile design and manufacturing for the mass market. This paper addresses this research gap by proposing that the concert stage acts as a crucial catalyst and accelerator for textile innovation. It argues that while technological advancements in materials science often occur independently, the high-visibility, high-demand environment of music performance provides a unique platform that validates these innovations aesthetically and creates the cultural momentum necessary for their diffusion into the mass market. The extreme demands of performance—requiring visual spectacle, durability, unique silhouettes, and interaction with lighting—compel costume designers and artists to experiment with materials and technologies that often exist at the forefront of textile science [4,5]. These onstage experiments, once validated through audience reception and amplified by media, create a powerful pull-through effect on the entire fashion supply chain.

The core research objective of this paper is to deconstruct this stage-to-streetwear pipeline. We first establish a robust theoretical framework that combines subcultural theory, the diffusion of innovations model, and the semiotics of fashion to explain the mechanisms of influence. We then analyze the role of the stage as a laboratory for textile experimentation, focusing on materiality, spectacle, and the integration of technology. Lastly, we apply this framework to conduct in-depth case studies across musical genres—including Glam Rock, Punk, Hip-Hop, and Modern Pop—to trace the trajectory of textile innovations from iconic stage costumes to mainstream apparel. The analysis also investigates the modern mechanisms of diffusion, highlighting the catalytic role of social media and the formalization of influence through strategic brand collaborations. For the purpose of this analysis, textile innovation is categorized into three distinct types. First, material innovation, which refers to the development or novel application of entirely new materials, such as electronic textiles (e-textiles) or 3D-printed polymers. Second, process innovation, which involves the creation and popularization of new manufacturing or finishing techniques applied to existing materials, exemplified by the chemical and mechanical distressing of cotton denim. Finally, aesthetic innovation, where existing textiles are recontextualized to create new stylistic meanings, such as the elevation of functional sportswear fabrics into the realm of luxury. This framework is used to precisely categorize the impact of each musical genre. Finally, the paper projects future trajectories of this relationship by considering the profound impacts of sustainability, the rise of digital fashion, and advanced manufacturing techniques.

By framing the influence of music performance within a clear and systematic theoretical structure, this paper aims to provide an illustrative and rational framework for textile designers, industry analysts, and academics to understand and interpret one of the most potent drivers of contemporary fashion trends.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative multi-case research design integrating

- (1) historical media analysis,
- (2) stage-costume archival review, and
- (3) thematic coding of performance-related texts.

This design is appropriate for uncovering the mechanisms through which stage aesthetics influence textile and fashion innovation.

Sampling Strategy

A purposive sampling strategy was used to identify representative stage performances from four influential music genres: Glam Rock, Punk, Hip-Hop, and Modern Pop.

The selection criteria were:

- (1) The performance generated substantial media discourse, as evidenced by a purposive sampling of major industry and cultural media coverage.
- (2) The costume involved notable textile/material experimentation.
- (3) High-quality videos or photo archives were available.

Sample size: 32 iconic performances (1972–2023), 108 costume units, 241 media texts (industry reports, interviews, backstage notes, designer statements).

Data Sources

Official performance videos, Designer interviews, Vogue / Rolling Stone / Textile World reports, Museum/brand archives (MoMA, V&A, Adidas Archive, etc.).

Data Coding Procedure

The six-step thematic analysis procedure proposed by Braun & Clarke (2006) was utilized. To ensure a transparent progression from raw data to final conclusions, the analysis followed a clear three-stage thematic development structure: (1) Initial Coding (identifying foundational codes), (2) Theme Generation (grouping codes into larger, coherent themes), and (3) Theme Refinement (defining and naming the final, significant themes).

The coding process was managed using MAXQDA software. Table 1 presents four representative excerpts drawn from the 241 texts. This study generated 121 initial codes. See Figure 1 for the thematic map.

Table 1. Open Coding and Original Text

Original Text Excerpt	Initial Open Code	Genre
“Under the spotlight, Bowie’s lamé suit exploded into streaks of metallic color.”	Interaction between light and metallic materials (light-effect enhancement)	Glam Rock
“We ripped the jeans ourselves to show we didn’t buy into polished fashion.”	DIY destruction technique / anti-consumerism	Punk
“The tracksuit was our armor—comfortable but full of power.”	Identity symbolism of sportswear materials	Hip-Hop
“The LED dress needed to survive sweat and choreography.”	Durability challenges of LED smart garments	Modern Pop

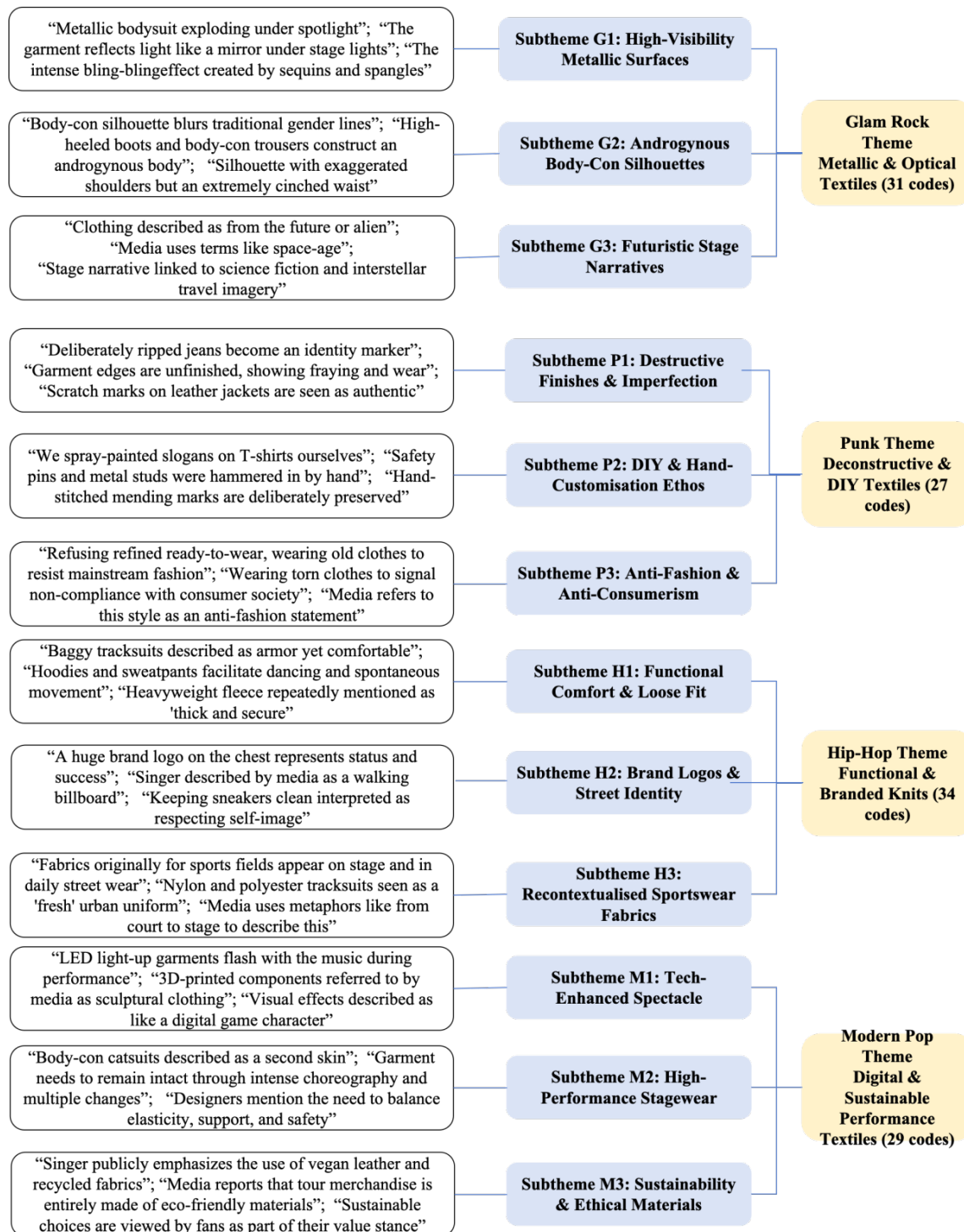


Figure 1. Thematic Map

Reliability and Validity

To establish inter-coder reliability, two independent coders were engaged. Both coders underwent a standardized training session to ensure a shared understanding of the coding manual and definitions. The

coders then independently (blindly) coded 30% of the sample, which was purposively selected to ensure representation across all four music genres and time periods. The analysis maintained an audit trail and utilized multi-source triangulation to enhance credibility. The inter-coder reliability (ICR) was calculated using Cohen's Kappa, yielding a score of 0.84, which indicates a high level of agreement.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: MODELING THE INFLUENCE

To move beyond anecdotal evidence, a multi-pronged theoretical framework is necessary to model the complex process of trend transmission from the concert stage to consumer textiles. This framework integrates three key theories.

Subcultural Theory and Stylistic Resistance

Pioneered by sociologists at the Birmingham School of Contemporary Cultural Studies, particularly Dick Hebdige's seminal work *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (1979), this theory posits that youth subcultures develop distinct styles as a form of symbolic resistance to or differentiation from mainstream society [6]. Music is often the gravitational center of these subcultures [7]. The fashion and textiles adopted—such as the leather and safety pins of Punk or the sportswear of early Hip-Hop—are not arbitrary but are loaded with meaning, signifying identity, allegiance, and ideology [8,9].

In this context, the musician is the archetypal subcultural leader. Their stage attire functions as a hyper-realized version of the subculture's uniform. The textiles chosen are critical: leather signifies toughness and rebellion; distressed denim represents authenticity and anti-consumerism; vibrant spandex in Glam Rock signals androgyny and hedonism. When these styles “trickle down” or are appropriated by mainstream fashion, they often retain a diluted form of their original semiotic value, but the textile characteristics (e.g., the distressed finish, the metallic sheen) become codified as a trend.

Diffusion of Innovations Theory

Everett Rogers' (1962) diffusion of innovations theory provides a powerful model for understanding how new ideas and technologies spread through cultures [10]. The theory outlines five categories of adopters: Innovators, Early Adopters, Early Majority, Late Majority, and Laggards. This can be directly mapped onto the fashion ecosystem:

- **Innovators:** These are the musicians and their costume designers. They create or adopt radical new uses

of textiles for the stage to achieve a unique aesthetic or functional outcome (e.g., Lady Gaga's team commissioning 3D-printed garments or LED-embedded fabrics).

- **Early Adopters:** These are the die-hard fans and fashion-forward individuals who are highly engaged with the music scene. They replicate the styles using do-it-yourself (DIY) methods or by seeking out niche designers. They are critical opinion leaders who validate the trend.
- **Early and Late Majority:** This represents the mainstream fashion industry and consumers. As the trend gains visibility through media, fast-fashion retailers and established brands produce more accessible and commercial versions of the stage look. The innovative textile is now produced at scale—for example, glitter-coated denim or neoprene tops become widely available.
- **Laggards:** These individuals adopt the trend much later, often when it is already declining in fashion relevance.

The music performance acts as the critical “innovation-decision process,” where a new style is introduced, evaluated by an audience, and its adoption path is initiated.

Semiotics of Fashion

Drawing from the work of Roland Barthes, the semiotics of fashion examines clothing as a language—a system of signs. Every garment or textile possesses a *signifier* (its physical form: color, texture, material) and a *signified* (the concept or meaning it represents). Stage costumes are semiotically dense artifacts. A sequined fabric, for example, is not just a polymer film coated with metal; it signifies glamour, spectacle, and celebrity. The harsh texture of raw, unbleached cotton can signify environmentalism and authenticity.

The translation from stage to streetwear is a process of semiotic transfer. The fashion industry isolates the most potent signifiers from a musician's look—the specific textile, silhouette, or color palette—and repackages them for a consumer who wishes to buy into the associated meaning. The textile itself becomes the primary carrier of this meaning. A consumer buying a jacket with exaggerated shoulders and a metallic finish is not just buying an article of clothing; they are purchasing a piece of the futuristic pop diva sign system. This entire process is illustrated in Figure 2.

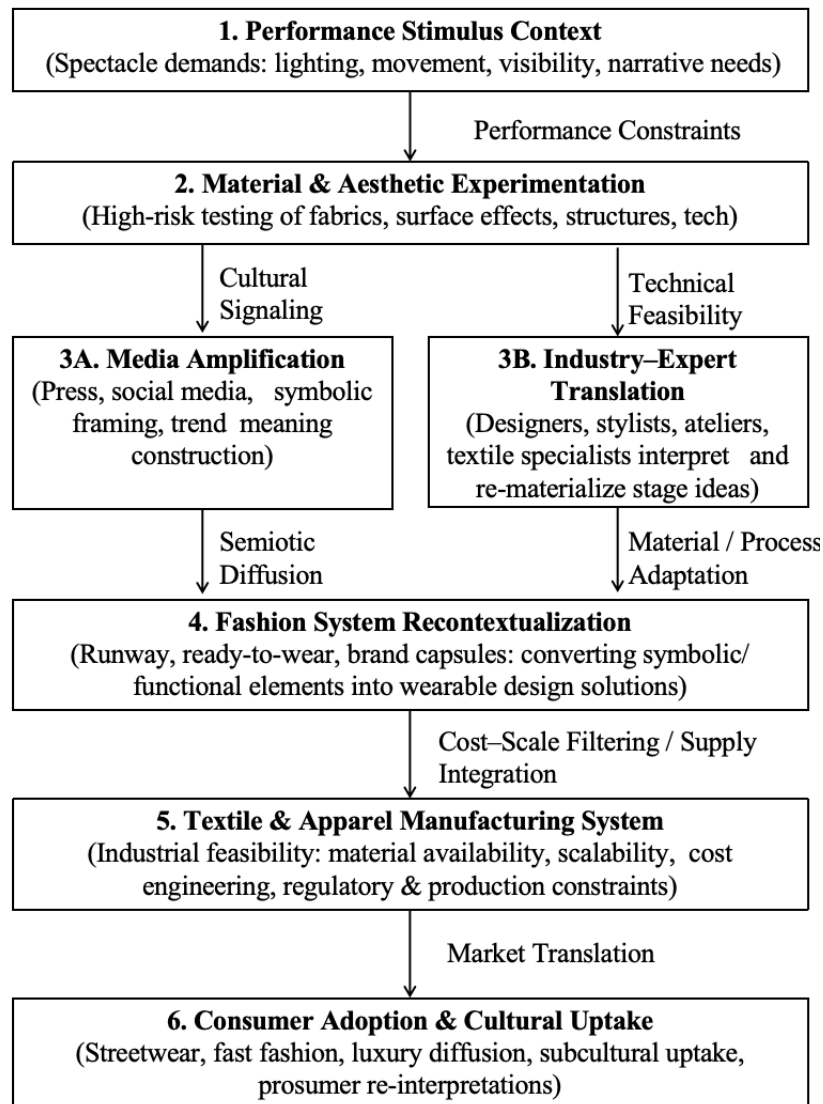


Figure 2. The Diffusion Model of Music-Driven Textile Trends

Note.: The model outlines six interconnected layers through which stage-based aesthetic and material innovation evolves into mass-market fashion adoption. Stage performance demands generate high-risk textile experimentation (Layer 2), which undergoes parallel cultural (Layer 3A) and technical (Layer 3B) reframing. These mediated signals are translated into wearable fashion artifacts (Layer 4), filtered through industrial production constraints (Layer 5), and eventually adopted by consumers across multiple market segments (Layer 6). Dotted lines indicate reverse feedback loops, emphasizing the non-linear, iterative nature of cultural-technological diffusion.

THE STAGE AS A LABORATORY FOR TEXTILE INNOVATION

The unique requirements of live performance make the stage an unparalleled environment for pushing the boundaries of textile design and application. This laboratory effect can be analyzed through three primary vectors: materiality for spectacle, technology integration, and performance functionality.

Materiality, Texture, and Spectacle

Visual impact is paramount in a performance setting, often viewed from a distance and under dramatic lighting. This necessitates the use of textiles with exaggerated or enhanced properties.

- **Light-Interactive Textiles:** Materials that manipulate light are a cornerstone of stage costume. This includes traditional materials like sequins, Lurex®, metallic threads, and high-sheen satin, which have been staples since the era of Disco and Glam Rock. The demand for ever-more spectacular effects has driven innovation in this area, leading to the development of iridescent films, retroreflective fabrics (which bounce light directly back to the source, creating a blinding flash effect for cameras), and fabrics woven with fiber optics. Pop stars like Taylor Swift and Katy Perry have famously utilized costumes embedded with thousands of Swarovski crystals. Taylor Swift's tour included dresses embellished with Swarovski crystals whose silver fringes shifted and swayed as she moved around the stage [11]. Katy Perry once arrived at the Met Gala dressed as a giant crystal chandelier complete with glowing lights [12].
- **Exaggerated Silhouettes and Textures:** To create memorable and iconic silhouettes, designers often turn to textiles with unique structural properties. Tulle, organza, and other stiff netting materials are used in voluminous quantities to create ethereal or dramatic shapes. Conversely, the use of liquid-like silk jersey or second-skin spandex and Lycra® allows for highlighting the human form, a key element in pop and dance performance. The textural palette is also extreme, ranging from the ruggedness of punk leather and denim to the opulent softness of velvet and the alien smoothness of polyvinyl chloride (PVC) and latex, each chosen for its powerful tactile and visual symbolism.

Technology-Infused Textiles and Smart Garments

The stage is a primary driver for the development and popularization of "smart textiles" and wearable technology. While still a niche in the consumer market, such technologies are frequently commissioned for high-profile tours and events, acting as a public showcase of future possibilities.

- **LED Integration and Electronic Textiles (e-textiles):** The integration of light-emitting diodes (LEDs) into fabric is a prime example of stage demands driving innovation. The core challenge is not merely attaching lights but creating a truly wearable, flexible, and durable luminous textile capable of withstanding the intense physical stress of a live performance. To solve this, designers like Moritz Waldemeyer, working on costumes for artists like Rihanna, had to pioneer techniques for embedding thousands of individually addressable LEDs onto flexible circuit boards that were then laminated onto stretch fabrics. This required solving specific engineering problems related to power distribution, heat dissipation, and ensuring the electronics could flex with the performer's body without breaking. These bespoke solutions, developed specifically for a world tour, served as highly visible proof-of-concept for the broader field of flexible e-textiles and inspired research into overcoming critical barriers such as cost reduction, mass production, and consumer-level durability. This onstage use normalizes the idea of technology as apparel and spurs research into making these textiles washable, durable, and cost-effective for wider use.
- **3D Printing and Advanced Fabrication:** Additive manufacturing, or 3D printing, offers unprecedented freedom in creating complex geometries and custom-fit garments that would be impossible with traditional textile methods. Similarly, additive manufacturing's application in fashion has been significantly accelerated by the stage. The challenge for collaborators like designer Iris van Herpen and musician Björk was to create complex, sculptural garments that were not only visually stunning but also lightweight and flexible enough for a performer to wear and move in. This pushed the boundaries of materials science for 3D printing, driving experimentation with flexible thermoplastic polyurethane (TPU) filaments and the development of complex algorithms to generate lattice structures that create the visual illusion of drape and movement, pushing the aesthetic boundaries of non-woven, rigid material construction. The high-profile success of these onstage creations demonstrated the viability of these advanced fabrication techniques, influencing mainstream designers to explore the aesthetic they introduced through more accessible methods like laser cutting. While direct-to-consumer 3D-printed clothing is still in its infancy, the aesthetic it introduces—complex, lattice-like, and perfectly contoured—influences cut-and-sew fashion, leading to trends like intricate laser cutting on fabrics and bonded, seamless constructions. This represents an aesthetic transfer rather than a direct technological lineage, as laser cutting and bonding techniques predate the mainstreaming of fashion 3D printing.

Functionality and Performance

Beyond aesthetics, stage costumes must function as high-performance athletic wear. A performer may dance, sweat, and undergo multiple quick changes during a single show. This places extreme demands on the textile’s physical properties.

- **Stretch and Recovery:** The universal adoption of spandex/elastane (e.g., Lycra®) in fashion is directly linked to its performance origins in sportswear and stage wear. The need for garments that allow for a full range of motion without deformation has driven the development of high-performance knits with superior four-way stretch and modulus.
- **Moisture Management and Durability:** Fabrics must be breathable and capable of wicking moisture away from the skin. This has led to the use of advanced polyester and polyamide microfibers, often with hydrophilic finishes, in stage costumes—the same technologies found in elite athletic apparel. Furthermore, extiles must be robust enough to withstand the immediate physical stresses and repeated costuming changes of a world tour, requiring high resistance to tearing, high modulus for recovery, and colorfastness. These functional requirements, proven on stage, often find their way into the athleisure market, where consumers demand both style and technical performance from their everyday clothing. These distinct requirements highlight why the stage functions as a crucible for material innovation, pushing performance metrics far beyond the standards for general consumer goods. Table 2 provides a detailed comparative analysis of these material property requirements, contrasting the demands of stage performance with those of general apparel.

Table 2. Comparative Analysis of Material Property Requirements: Stage Performance vs. General Apparel

Material Property		Requirement for Stage Performance Textiles	Requirement for General Apparel Textiles
Stretch and Recovery (Elasticity)		Extreme: Critical for full range of motion. Four-way stretch with high recovery modulus is essential.	Moderate: Primarily for comfort and fit. Two-way stretch is often sufficient.
Moisture Management (Wicking)		High: Critical for performer’s thermal regulation and comfort during intense physical activity.	Variable: Desirable in activewear and base layers, less critical for outerwear or formal wear.
Visual Impact (Luster, Color)		Maximum: Often exaggerated. Use of metallic, retroreflective, high-saturation, light-interactive	Moderate: Governed by trends and context. Subtlety is often valued.

	materials.	
Durability (Abrasion/Tear)	Requirement for Stage Performance Textiles: High for specific functional areas (e.g., seams, high-stress points). Must withstand the physical motion of performance and repeated packing/unpacking, but often relies on specialized repair and maintenance.	Moderate: Varies by product type and price point. Standardized testing for general use.
Strength-to-Weight Ratio	Optimized: Must be lightweight for comfort but strong enough to support embellishments or tech.	Standard: Generally, less critical unless for specialized technical apparel (e.g., outdoor gear).
Technological Integration	Emerging research and development (R&D) platform: High tolerance for experimental tech (LEDs, sensors, fiber optics).	Minimal to nonexistent: Focus is on cost, scalability, and washability. A very niche market.
Washability/Care	Specialized: Often requires professional or spot cleaning. Durability during washing is secondary to performance aesthetics.	Simple: Machine-washable and easy-care properties are highly valued by consumers.

CASE STUDIES: GENRE-SPECIFIC ANALYSIS OF TEXTILE DIFFUSION

Analyzing specific music genres provides concrete evidence of the stage-to-streetwear pipeline, where each genre champions a distinct type of textile innovation—from material and process to aesthetic—that subsequently enters the mainstream. Based on the thematic analysis of textual data, visual archives, and industry reports, this study identified high-frequency characteristics across the dimensions of material, process, and aesthetics. The findings are presented through case studies, which use iconic examples to illustrate the themes robustly derived from the full coded dataset. The comparison across the four representative genres demonstrates how music performance drives the diffusion of textile materials, processing technologies, and stylistic aesthetics at different historical stages (see Table 3, Figure 2).

Table 3. Comprehensive Matrix: Music Genre Influence on Textile Innovation

Music Genre/Era	Key Artists/Aesthetics	Key Textile Innovations and Processes	Type of Innovation	Resulting Mainstream Fashion Trend
Glam Rock (1970s)	David Bowie, Marc Bolan; Futuristic, Androgynous, High-Luster. High-Frequency Terms: “shiny,” “metallic,” “futuristic.”	Material Innovation: Use of metallic yarns (Lurex®), high-stretch synthetic fibers (spandex), PVC and metal-coated textiles.	Material Innovation / Aesthetic Innovation	Mainstreaming of glitter and metallic fabrics; acceptance of synthetics in statement wear.
Punk (Late 1970s–1980s)	Sex Pistols, The Ramones; Deconstructed, DIY, Anti-establishment. High-Frequency Terms: “destroy,” “DIY,” “rebellion.”	Process Innovation: Chemical/mechanical distressing of cotton denim; physical modification of leather (studs, rips); hand-destruction and collage techniques.	Process Innovation / Aesthetic Innovation	“Distressed” and “destroyed” finishes as a standard textile process; use of hardware as decoration.
Hip-Hop (1980s–Present)	Run-DMC, Kanye West; Sportswear, Brand-centric, Urban Luxury. High-Frequency Terms: “street,” “logo,” “sporty,” “luxury.”	Aesthetic Innovation/Recontextualization: Cultural adoption and recontextualization of high-performance nylon and polyester fleece; focus on premium cotton jersey; advanced logo application.	Aesthetic Innovation / Recontextualization	The rise of athleisure; sportswear textiles used in luxury goods; logomania.
Modern Pop (2000s–Present)	Lady Gaga, Beyoncé, Billie Eilish; High-Tech Spectacle, Couture Fusion, Sustainability Focus. High-Frequency Terms: “tech,” “LED,” “opto-textile.”	Material & Process Innovation: Integration of e-textiles (LEDs); 3D-printed polymers (TPU); advocacy for upcycled and vegan leather; laser cutting and seamless bonding.	Material Innovation / Process Innovation	Tech-infused accents in apparel; structured silhouettes; increased demand for sustainable performance wear.

Glam Rock (1970s): Androgyny and Synthetics

This theme emerged during axial coding, where 31 coded units were grouped under the category of “material boldness and optical experimentation.”

These codes consistently highlighted how Glam Rock performers utilized metallic textiles, reflective surfaces, and synthetic materials to construct exaggerated identities and to explore the stage as a laboratory for textile innovation.

- **Stage Aesthetics:** Spearheaded by artists like David Bowie (as Ziggy Stardust) and Marc Bolan, Glam Rock was defined by androgyny, theatricality, and science-fiction-inspired futurism. Costumes were flamboyant, tight-fitting, and designed to challenge traditional gender norms.
- **Key Textiles:** The look was built on a foundation of new, synthetic, and visually loud materials. Spandex and Lurex® were crucial for creating shimmering, second-skin jumpsuits. High-sheen satin, crushed velvet, and metallic PVC were used for jackets and platform boots. Bold, graphic prints on polyester fabrics were also a signature.
- **Textile Diffusion and Market Impact:** Glam Rock was instrumental in popularizing synthetic textiles in mainstream fashion. It broke down barriers for men to wear flamboyant colors, prints, and textures. The widespread use of stretch fabrics for visual effect on stage accelerated their acceptance into everyday trousers and tops. The metallic thread, once reserved for evening wear, became a staple accent in knitwear and denim for the mass market.

Punk (Late 1970s–1980s): Deconstruction and DIY

This theme emerged during axial coding, where 27 coded units were consolidated into the category “DIY craft disruption.”

The coded patterns revealed that Punk fashion leveraged intentional destruction, hand-modified garments, and anti-fashion craft processes as a political and aesthetic strategy that subsequently influenced mainstream textile experimentation.

- **Stage Aesthetics:** As a direct reaction against the perceived excesses of Glam Rock and Prog Rock, Punk championed an aggressive, anti-establishment, and DIY aesthetic. The look was raw, deconstructed, and confrontational, pioneered by bands like the Sex Pistols and The Ramones.
- **Key Textiles and Techniques:** Punk’s innovation was less about new materials and more about new processes applied to existing, utilitarian textiles. Denim and leather were foundational, but they were subjected to ripping, bleaching, and being adorned with safety pins, studs, and hand-painted slogans. Traditional Scottish tartan was recontextualized, torn, and used to signify anarchy rather than heritage. The emphasis was on authenticity and a rejection of polished manufacturing.
- **Textile Diffusion and Market Impact:** Punk’s influence on textile finishing is immeasurable. The concept of “distressed” or “destroyed” denim, now a multibillion-dollar segment of the jeans market, is culturally rooted in and owes its mass-market acceptance to the Punk stage aesthetic. The practice of using

hardware (studs, zippers, safety pins) as a primary decorative element on garments became a mainstream trend. Designers from Zandra Rhodes in the 1970s to the present have continuously reference Punk's deconstructionist ethos. It proved that the value of a textile could lie in its imperfection and its narrative.

Hip-Hop (1980s–2000s): Sportswear, Branding, and Luxury

This theme was identified during axial coding, with 34 coded units forming the category "functional comfort and urban material translation."

The codes repeatedly showed that Hip-Hop culture repurposed sportswear fabrics, performance knits, and utility-driven materials, transforming them from functional athletic contexts into fashion and streetwear settings.

- **Stage Aesthetics:** Early Hip-Hop style, exemplified by groups like Run-DMC and Grandmaster Flash, was rooted in the accessible sportswear and workwear of their New York City environment. The look was about aspirational authenticity, branding, and "looking fresh."
- **Key Textiles:** Nylon and polyester tracksuits, often from brands like Adidas, were a key uniform. High-quality cotton fleece for sweatshirts, pristine denim, and luxury materials like leather and shearling for outerwear were prominent. The textile became a canvas for branding, with oversized logos being a critical element of the look.
- **Textile Diffusion and Market Impact:** Hip-Hop is widely recognized as the most significant cultural driver in establishing athleisure as the dominant mode of dress in the 21st century. It has taken functional sportswear textiles and re-codified them as everyday luxury and status symbols. The genre's obsession with brands and logos has fueled the logomania trend that has cycled through fashion multiple times. As Hip-Hop artists have become global superstars, their influence has significantly amplified and accelerated a fusion of streetwear with high fashion, cementing the cultural necessity for luxury houses like Gucci and Louis Vuitton to incorporate high-performance textiles, sneaker culture, and streetwear silhouettes into their collections. This effect amplified existing, niche luxury-sportswear collaborations.

Modern Pop (2000s–Present): High-Tech Spectacle and Couture

This theme emerged through axial coding, where 29 coded units clustered around the category "high-tech textile integration."

These codes illuminated how Modern Pop performances employ LED fabrics, 3D-printed components, smart textiles, and engineered materials to merge aesthetics with technological innovation on stage.

- **Stage Aesthetics:** The modern pop diva (e.g., Beyoncé, Lady Gaga, Taylor Swift) operates on a scale of spectacle that requires a fusion of haute couture craftsmanship and cutting-edge technology. Such performances are multimedia events where costumes are central narrative devices.
- **Key Textiles:** This era is defined by hybridity. Couture techniques are applied to performance materials. Bodysuits, a stage staple, are crafted from advanced stretch fabrics (often custom-printed or embellished) combined with illusion tulle for a “nude” effect. We see the integration of LEDs and fiber optics, as well as experiments with 3D printing, laser cutting, and advanced fabric bonding. Furthermore, this era is marked by a growing emphasis on sustainability, where artists act as powerful catalysts for industry change. When an artist like Billie Eilish consistently champions vegan leather and upcycled textiles on stage and in collaborations, the impact is multi-layered and direct. First, it creates immediate, widespread consumer demand for these specific materials. Second, in their formal collaborations with major brands, these artists can mandate the use of certified sustainable materials, compelling large-scale supply chains to source and integrate eco-friendly textiles like organic cotton or recycled polyester. This, in turn, provides a strong commercial incentive for materials science companies to accelerate research and development and to scale up the production of next-generation sustainable materials—from mushroom-based leathers to innovative biodegradable polymers—using the high-profile stage as a validation platform.
- **Textile Diffusion and Market Impact:** The influence is twofold. First, it accelerates the “trickle-down” of avant-garde concepts. Intricate embellishments, structured silhouettes, and illusion paneling seen on a Beyoncé tour quickly appear in fast-fashion formal and club wear. Second, it serves as a high-profile R&D platform. The technical challenges solved by creating a durable, flexible, LED-integrated garment for a world tour contribute to the broader knowledge base of e-textiles, potentially lowering barriers to future consumer applications. The advocacy for sustainable materials on such a visible platform also significantly boosts consumer awareness and demand. Each of these genres, therefore, acted as a catalyst for specific advancements in textile technology, material application, and chemical or mechanical processing. The direct lineage from stage aesthetic to mainstream textile application across these diverse case studies is summarized for comparative review.

DISCUSSION

It is critical to frame the influence of music performance in the context of broader technological and social trends. The relationship is not one of simple, direct causation but rather of powerful catalysis. For instance, to use the example of Glam Rock, the technological capacity to produce metallic yarns existed prior to the genre's emergence. However, these materials were often niche or confined to specific applications. The theatrical demands of the Glam Rock stage provided a high-profile testbed that showcased the material's aesthetic potential, creating a powerful cultural signifier of futurism and androgyny. This cultural validation, amplified by the artists' influence, generated the widespread consumer demand that pulled the technology from the niche into the mainstream. Therefore, the role of the concert stage is best understood as a crucial accelerator that takes nascent or existing textile technologies and provides them with the cultural relevance and momentum required for mass-market adoption. First, it is important to acknowledge that while this paper focuses on the stage-to-streetwear pipeline, the relationship between music and fashion is not strictly unidirectional but is a dynamic, symbiotic ecosystem. Our model somewhat underplays the significant agency of independent fashion designers, couture houses, and textile manufacturers in initiating trends. Many of the most iconic stage looks are the result of direct collaborations where the musician acts as a muse for a designer's pre-existing vision. For example, Lady Gaga's early embrace of Alexander McQueen's avant-garde creations, or Beyoncé's collaborations with houses like Balmain, saw the stage become a powerful platform for amplifying a specific high-fashion aesthetic. In these instances, the influence flows from the runway to the stage, which then projects it to a global audience. Similarly, textile manufacturers themselves are innovators, often developing new materials and presenting them to both the fashion and entertainment industries. A more complex model than that shown in Figure 1 would therefore include these feedback loops, where the fashion industry is not just a passive receiver in the mass commercialization stage, but an active participant in the initial innovation and experimentation stage as well. Existing high-end fashion trends frequently influence the stage looks of artists; for instance, the rise of luxury streetwear aesthetics in the 2010s greatly shaped the performance styles of hip-hop artists, and they further amplified this trend on the stage. Additionally, these two fields of music and fashion are often simultaneously influenced by broader social technological changes. For example, the emergence of the internet and digital culture in the late 1990s independently gave rise to the growth of electronic music and the emergence of futurist "cyber" aesthetics in the fashion industry. Although a comprehensive analysis of these multi-directional flows is beyond the

scope of this study, acknowledging this complexity provides a more complete background for us to understand the powerful and concentrated influence that the highly exposed platform of the concert stage can exert. While the core process of trend transmission from stage to street remains intact, its velocity and structure have been fundamentally altered by digital media and new business models. The mechanisms for transmitting styles have been supercharged, moving from a slow trickle-down to an instantaneous cascade. In the pre-internet era, the diffusion of stage styles relied on print media, television programs like MTV, and word-of-mouth, a process that could take months or even years to saturate the mainstream market. Today, social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and X (formerly Twitter) have reduced this lag time to near-zero. A custom outfit worn by an artist at a major event is photographed, shared, and analyzed globally within minutes, creating immediate and widespread consumer demand. This instantaneous visual dissemination allows fast-fashion companies, which utilize agile supply chains, to design, produce, and ship inspired versions of these looks in a matter of weeks. This adoption occurs on multiple levels: from direct aesthetic appropriations in high-street fashion, to the more profound, widespread integration of the underlying performance textiles—such as stretch fabrics and technical knits—into staple mass-market products. TikTok, in particular, with its focus on short-form video and user-generated content, empowers millions of users to adopt and reinterpret trends, creating a powerful, decentralized engine of diffusion that operates at an unprecedented pace. However, this accelerated dissemination process is constrained by a crucial economic and practical filter. A textile innovation, no matter how culturally influential it may be, cannot enter the mass market if it cannot achieve large-scale economic production. The transformation from custom stage costumes to mass-market products is essentially a cost-engineering exercise. For instance, the complex and expensive electronic textiles used on stage cannot be directly replicated. Instead, the industry develops a lower-cost alternative to imitate its aesthetic effect, such as printing circuit patterns on regular fabrics. This process is also influenced by intellectual property factors. Although the design of specific costumes may be protected, the core textile concept—such as metal finishes or distressed textures—is usually difficult to patent, allowing fast-fashion manufacturers to quickly and widely replicate the core aesthetics of the trend. Therefore, whether a trend driven by the stage can successfully spread depends not only on its cultural appeal but also on whether the industry can develop an expandable and cost-effective method to reproduce its key visual and tactile features.

Beyond the acceleration provided by digital media, the relationship between musicians and fashion has also deepened through more formalized commercial structures. The dynamic has evolved from one of passive

inspiration to one of active and direct commercial partnership. High-profile collaborations like Rihanna's Fenty line with Puma, Kanye West's Yeezy with Adidas, and Pharrell Williams' extensive work with Chanel and Adidas represent the ultimate formalization of the stage-to-streetwear pipeline. In these collaborations, the artist's identity and stage persona are meticulously translated into commercial product lines where textile choices are paramount. The specific knit of a Yeezy sneaker, the unique performance materials in a Fenty x Puma collection, or the custom colorways are all carefully engineered to embody the artist's brand and aesthetic. This model effectively bypasses the traditional trickle-down process, offering consumers direct and immediate access to the artist-approved look. The stage and the artist's social media presence thus become a direct-to-consumer showroom, demonstrating a highly effective and vertically integrated form of marketing.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this paper has argued that the influence of music performance on textile and fashion trends is not a random or purely inspirational phenomenon but a structured, catalytic, and interpretable process. By establishing a theoretical framework based on subcultural theory, the diffusion of innovations, and semiotics, we can understand how and why specific textile characteristics travel from the stage to the consumer. The concert stage functions as a vital laboratory where the aesthetic, technological, and functional limits of textiles are tested and proven. The case studies from key musical genres provide illustrative examples of this pipeline, suggesting a strong lineage from stage-specific materials to their ubiquitous status in the global fashion market.

This is evident not only in aesthetic trends like distressed denim, but more fundamentally in the widespread adoption of performance materials such as spandex into nearly all categories of everyday wear, and the dominance of technical knit fabrics driven by the athleisure movement, which has its cultural roots in Hip-Hop. Modern mechanisms like social media and artist-brand collaborations have dramatically accelerated and formalized this process, creating a deeply integrated ecosystem where culture and commerce are inextricably linked.

Looking forward, the dynamic interplay between music performance and textile design is set to evolve further, driven by emerging technological and cultural shifts. A primary driver will be sustainability, as influential musicians use their platforms not just to advocate for change, but to exert direct commercial pressure through their brand collaborations and merchandise lines. This will create powerful market signals that will accelerate consumer demand for innovative, eco-friendly textiles, thereby boosting their commercial viability and

incentivizing investment in circular economy models and sustainable materials science. Another key frontier is the rise of digital fashion and the metaverse, where virtual concerts will demand the creation of “digital textiles” with novel or impossible physical properties. The visual aesthetics derived from these designs will likely serve as inspiration for physical fabric design, while acknowledging the ultimate constraints of real-world material science and manufacturing. Finally, advancements in hyper-personalization and co-creation, enabled by artificial intelligence (AI) and advanced manufacturing, may allow for a future where fans can co-design merchandise inspired directly by an artist’s tour costumes. The relationship thus remains symbiotic and forward-looking, with music performance poised to be a critical showcase for the next generation of sustainable, digital, and personalized textiles. For the textile industry, understanding this powerful cultural driver is essential; the sustained mass-market demand for these stage-born textile innovations not only shapes consumer trends but can ultimately influence the direction of material development and the specifications of the manufacturing machinery required to produce them at scale.

Author Contributions

All work in this study was independently completed by Min Yi.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Funding

This research received no external funding.

Acknowledgements

Not applicable.

REFERENCES

- [1] Currid-Halkett E. The Warhol Economy: How Fashion, Art, and Music Drive New York City-New Edition. Oxford, UK: Princeton University Press; 2020. doi: 10.2307/j.ctvzsmf4t
- [2] Cunningham PA. Fashion in Popular Culture. A Companion to Popular Culture. Hoboken, NJ, USA: Wiley; 2016. p. 361-380. doi: 10.1002/978111883341.ch20

- [3] Goto Z. *Elvis Style: From Zoot Suits to Jumpsuits*. London, UK: Libri Publishing Limited; 2016.
- [4] Birringer J, Danjoux M. *Wearable technology for the performing arts. Smart Clothes and Wearable Technology*. New York, NY, USA: Elsevier; 2023. p. 529-571. doi: 10.1016/B978-0-12-819526-0.00005-9
- [5] Bate T. *Costume with Textiles: The Role and Development of Textiles in the Interpretation of Historical Dress for Contemporary Theatrical Costume*. Huddersfield, England: University of Huddersfield; 2015.
- [6] Heddige D. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. London, UK: Meuthen; 1979. Volume 10, p. 2-3.
- [7] Mueller CA. *The Music of the Goth Subculture: Postmodernism and Aesthetics*. Tallahassee, FL, USA: The Florida State University; 2008.
- [8] Marzel S-R, Stiebel GD. *Dress and Ideology: Fashioning Identity from Antiquity to the Present*. London, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing; 2015.
- [9] Brantley VT. *Hip-Hop Clothing: The Meaning of Subcultural Style*. Tallahassee, FL, USA: The Florida State University; 1999.
- [10] Rogers EM, Cartano DG. Methods of measuring opinion leadership. *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 1962; 26(3):435-441. doi: 10.1086/267118
- [11] Vogue Hong Kong. (2023, March 18). The best of Taylor Swift's Eras Tour looks. *Vogue*. Retrieved August 26, 2025, from <https://www.voguehk.com/en/article/fashion/taylor-swift-eras-tour-looks/>
- [12] Vogue. (2019, May 6). Katy Perry gets "lit" on the Met Gala red carpet in Moschino's chandelier dress. *Vogue*. Retrieved August 26, 2025, from <https://www.vogue.com/article/katy-perry-moschino-chandelier-dress-met-gala-2019>